

REMARKS

This Application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Advisory Action mailed June 18, 2004. To clarify various aspects of inventive subject matter, Applicants amend Claims 14, 19, 21, and 22. Claims 18 and 20 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants also introduce new Claims 23 and 24. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration, further examination, and favorable action in this case.

Interview Summary

Applicants thank Examiner Manoharan for the telephone conferences conducted with Charles Suh, Applicants' representative, on July 28, 2004 and for her thoughtful consideration of this case. Pursuant to M.P.E.P. §713.04, Applicants submit this summary of the telephone conferences to record Applicants' understanding of the substance of the conferences. If Applicants' understanding is inaccurate, notice of such is appreciated.

During the telephone conferences, Applicants' representative agreed to amend Claim 14 to indicate that the limitation of ". . . the dehydration column operating at greater than ambient pressure," as recited by Claim 14, results in a generation of low pressure steam approximately within a range of 0.7-2.0 kilograms/cm², which has a higher upper limit than typical pressure range of low pressure steam. Examiner Manoharan has agreed that such an amendment would overcome all of the references that she has previously cited against Claims 14-22, which includes, but is not limited to, U.S. Patent No. 2,275,802 issued to Othmer ("*Othmer*"), U.S. Patent No. 2,171,549 issued to Gordon et al. ("*Gordon*"), and what the Examiner has previously characterized as admitted prior art in the pending application ("*conventional process*"). However, she has explicitly reserved her right to conduct additional searches in view of this amendment. Further, Examiner Manoharan has confirmed that the identified limitation of Claim 14 has proper antecedent basis in the specification in view of a previous amendment to the specification.

During the telephone conferences, Examiner Manoharan also indicated that she has never received a copy of a non-patent document listed as "PCT Notification of Transmittal of

the International Search Report of the Declaration mailed March 4, 2004, re PCT/ US 03/25320 filed Aug. 12, 2003 (7 pages)" in the PTO form 1449 submitted with an IDS filed on March 23, 2004. Although Applicants believe that a copy of this document has been previously submitted to the PTO, Applicants nevertheless provide another copy of this document for the convenience of the Examiner.

§ 103 Rejection in the previous Final Office Action

The Final Office Action dated April 5, 2004 rejects Claims 14-22 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatenable over the *conventional process* in view of *Othmer* and *Gordon*. Within the spirit of the agreement reached in the above-summarized telephone conferences, Applicants have amended Claim 14 and respectfully submit that the amended Claim 14 and dependent Claims 15-24 are allowable at least over the proposed combination of the previously cited references. For example, Claim 14 is allowable over the proposed combination of the cited references because the proposed combination does not teach or suggest "distilling the input feed stream in an azeotropic dehydration column having an overhead section into a vapor stream, the dehydration column operating at greater than ambient pressure thereby allowing a generation of low pressure steam at a pressure level approximately within 0.7-2.0 kilograms/cm² during a condensing process; . . . condensing the vapor stream to separate acetic acid from water and to generate low pressure steam at a pressure level approximately within 0.7-2.0 kilograms/cm²," as recited by Claim 14. Favorable action is requested.

§ 112 Rejections in the previous Final Office Action

The Final Office Action dated April 5, 2004 rejects Claims 14-22 under 35 U.S.C. Section 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. More specifically, the Office Action states the following: (1) It is unclear whether "an overhead pressure. . .," recited by Claims 21 and 22 would constitute the "greater than ambient pressure" recited by Claim 14, (2) ". . . a liquid having an organic component and a water component. . .," as recited by Claim 14, causes ambiguity and confusion, and (3) "the 'organic component' is also broadening the initial recited 'acetic acid'. The 'a water

component' should be - the water component - since water is already initially recited in line 3." Claims 21 and 22 have been amended to add clarification to the form of Claims 21 and 22, and to render moot item (1) discussed above. Further, amendments to Claim 14 render moot items (2) and (3) discussed above. Favorable action is requested.

New Claims

In addition to the reasons described above, new Claim 23 is allowable over the cited references also because none of the cited references teaches or suggests "using the low pressure steam for power generation," as recited by Claim 23. Further, new Claim 24 is allowable over the cited references because none of the cited references teaches or suggests "directing the low pressure steam to a power generator," as recited by Claim 24. Favorable action is requested.

CONCLUSION

Applicants have now made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for allowance. For the foregoing reasons, and for other reasons clearly apparent, Applicants respectfully request full allowance of Claims 14-24.

Attached herewith is a check in the amount of \$385.00 made payable to the "Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks" to satisfy the request for continued examination fee of 37 CFR 1.117(e) and a one month extension of time fee in the amount of \$55.00.

Although Applicants believe that no other fees are due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 02-0384 of BAKER BOTTS L.L.P.

Respectfully submitted,

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